United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council invites Secretary-General to make necessary preparations for holding of referendum of self-determination of people of Western Saraha before end of year; asks for proposals concerning present role and strength of United Nations Mission there.

+ As Bosnian peace talks continue at Headquarters, Co-Chairmen deplore reports of heavy fighting in eastern Bosnia and call on those responsible to grant immediate access to international humanitarian organizations.

+ Department of Humanitarian Affairs launches inter-agency appeal for $20 million to alleviate plight of nearly 100,000 people in Georgia affected by internal strife and a declining economy.

+ Charter Committee debates expanding Security Council membership, cooperation with regional organizations and assistance to States affected by application of sanctions.

+ Oscar Camillion, Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus, submits resignation; to return to Argentina as Minister of Defence.

+ Panel to discuss issues of domestic violence and situation of women in former Yugoslavia as part of the observance ceremonies of the International Women's Day.

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The Security Council today urged the two parties concerned in the question of Western Sahara to cooperate with the Secretary-General in his efforts to work out the modalities for the holding of a referendum of self-determination of the people in that Territory before the end of the year, at the latest.

The Council took that action by adopting unanimously a resolution which invited the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Western Sahara to intensify their efforts, in cooperation with the parties, to resolve

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the issues concerning interpretation and application of the criteria for voter eligibility. It further invited the Secretary-General to make necessary preparations for the referendum and to commence voter registration on a prompt basis, beginning with the updated lists of the 1974 census.

The Council invited the Secretary-General to report to it no later than 31 May on the outcome of his efforts and asked that proposals for the necessary adjustments to the present role and strength of the United Nations Mission for the Referndum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) be included in that report.

In a previous report to the Security Council, dated 26 January, the Secretary-General had requested guidance from the Security Council on "how best to proceed" in pursuance of a solution to the question of Western Sahara. He said it was "regrettable" that the parties -- the Moroccan Government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) -- had "failed ... to reach a relatively straightforward compromise" on the holding of a meeting of tribal chiefs at the end of November 1992. The purpose of that meeting, the Secretary-General wrote, went no further than to provide him and his Special Representative with "advice on the procedures for the identification of voters eligible to participate in the referendum".

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Talks aimed at securing peace in the former Yugoslavia continued at Headquarters today with meetings between Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen, Co-Chairmen of the International Conference of former Yugoslavia and President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Prime Minister Akmazic and Mate Boban, the Bosnian Croat leader. Mr. Vance, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Yugoslavia, and Lord Owen, the European Community negotiator, were expected to meet with the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, and his delegation this afternoon.

According to the Co-Chairmen's spokesman, Fred Eckhard, today's discussions focused on "Muslim-Croat relations in light of recent tensions between those two groups" and then moved on to "the peace package, generally, and the question of interim measures" pending the adoption of a constitution, "if and when a peace agreement is signed".

In a related development concerning the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Co-Chairmen today strongly deplored that, even as peace talks were taking place in New York, heavy fighting continued in eastern Bosnia, in particular in Cerska and Srebrenica, resulting in new displacements of innocent civilians caught up in the conflict.

According to a statement issued at Headquarters, a high number of casualties had been reported, especially affecting the beleaguered Muslim population. The Co-Chairmen deplored the fact that, in spite of continuous assurances and recent Security Council statements on the observance of international humanitarian law, safe passage of relief convoys continued to be

rendered impossible. The Co-Chairmen counted on those responsible "to grant immediate access to international humanitarian organizations, in particular so as to render the evacuation of wounded persons possible", the statement concluded.

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The United Nations has launched an inter-agency appeal to the international community for $20 million to cover emergency humanitarian assistance to the people of the Republic of Georgia.

According to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA), which issued the appeal today, nearly 100,000 people, including displaced and returnees, are in urgent need of food and non-food assistance, due to the political and military strife in Georgia.

An inter-agency mission led by the Department visited Georgia from 30 January to 16 February, at the request of the Georgian Government, and concluded that the effects of the internal strife in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, combined with economic decline in Georgia, have been devastating. The Georgian Government had assured the mission that the relief organizations would have unrestricted access to the conflict-affected areas in the country and that "safe passage" would be given to all humanitarian supplies.

According to the appeal, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) will provide health care, nutrition for children and mothers, and social welfare services; the World Food Programme (WFP) will provide food aid as well as emergency logistics assistance; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will focus on protection and on non-food assistance; and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will provide transportation assistance.

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Proposals to expand the membership of the Security Council and to reform its decision-making processes were discussed at the general debate of the 'Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization', held at Headquarters today.

Speakers also called for enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and other regional organizations, and for assistance to third States affected by the application of the Security Council sanctions.

The representative of Brazil, Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, said the end of the cold war had witnessed a dramatic increase in the activities of the Security Council and that a new reality raised questions about that body's "representative" character. He pointed out that while 180 countries were now represented in the United Nations, the number of seats in the Council had remained unchanged since 1963.

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Ana Mercedes Botero, the representative of Colombia, said the relationship between the General Assembly and the Council should be marked by greater equilibrium and cooperation. A new form of "constitutional control" over the Council might allow for greater cooperation between that body and the Assembly, she added.

The Charter Committee will meet again on Friday, 5 March.

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Oscar Camillion, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Cyprus, has submitted his resignation in order to return to Argentina as that country's Minister of Defence, a United Nations spokesman said today.

The Secretary-General, while accepting the resignation with "regret", has expressed his appreciation for the contributions made by Mr. Camillion with regard to United Nations efforts to resolve the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Camillion was appointed as Special Representative in October 1987 and took up duties the following February.

A search for his successor would begin immediately, the spokesman said.

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A panel discussing different aspects of violence against women will be held at Headquarters on Thursday, 4 March, as part of the ceremonies observing the International Women's Day.

During the meeting, Roxanna Carillo of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will, among other speakers from different institutions, recall United Nations efforts to reduce violence against women, including a draft declaration on the subject to be considered by the General Assembly this fall.

Other issues to be discussed include domestic violence, the situation of women in former Yugoslavia whose human rights were seriously violated by rape, as well as forms of violence in Africa and Asia.

International Women's Day was first proclaimed in Denmark in 1910, in observance of 8 March 1857, when women textile workers in New York City took to the streets to claim the right to work and more human working conditions. Since then it has been commemorated annually on 8 March around the world by women's groups, Governments and the United Nations.

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